1 Course Description

1.1 Overview

Welcome to Introductory Sociology for Healthcare Professions! This course is designed to introduce you to the "study of society" and to what Mills called the "sociological imagination": a way of viewing the events, relationships, and social phenomena that shape our individual lives and collective experience. Although this course focuses on examples relevant to healthcare professionals and pay particular attention to material that may appear on the MCAT, it covers the same core concepts as those covered in Introductory Sociology (SOCY1001). It is therefore not an appropriate course for students who have already taken, or who are registered for, Introductory Sociology (SOCY1001).

We will begin by exploring some of the major theoretical issues and methodological approaches that constitute the sociological enterprise. Then we survey some key areas of sociological inquiry, examining topics such as socialization, stratification and inequality, schooling, work and economic life, and health and well-being. Throughout the course, emphasis will be placed on understanding topics and issues through the sociological imagination. As a critical perspective, sociology is uniquely positioned to question existing conditions and analyze the social, political, economic, historical, and cultural forces which shape, define, and change human behaviors and experiences including health and illness. The course also fulfills Boston College’s social justice theme because we explore ways in which class, gender, race, religion, and immigrant status have shaped social relations in the U.S. and we work to understand how power and privilege underlie social institutions.

1.2 Objectives

SOCY1002 is a part of the Core Curriculum in Sociology. As such it is designed to address a range of intellectual issues, using a variety of methodologies, and to engage students in particular ways. These are discussed below:

- To provide students with a broad overview of sociology.

*This syllabus was influenced by Lara Birk’s 2014 syllabus for this course at Boston College and Cawo Abdi’s 2014 syllabus for Intro to Sociology at the University of Minnesota.
• To increase students’ awareness of cultural diversity by examining how issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation shape health and illness in contemporary U.S. society and around the world.

• To expose students to a variety of methodological approaches and tools. By looking at a variety of points of view we are able to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of various methods of analysis.

• To highlight health policy implications and to understand patterns in social life that affect development of healthcare institutions, healthcare delivery, as well as socialization of healthcare professionals.

• To foster students’ critical thinking and writing abilities in their analysis of societal issues, and in their articulations of these issues. Students are expected to be able to apply sociological theories and debates into their everyday practices.

1.3 Course Communication

Please do not hesitate to email me (wen.fan@bc.edu) whenever you have questions. If you don’t hear within 24 hours during the week, try again. You can also visit me during my office hour. If the current office hour does not work for you, I am happy to meet with you at another mutually convenient time.

1.4 Texts and Materials

Required (be sure to order the correct edition):


1.5 Course Feedback

It is my second time teaching this course; any feedback is greatly appreciated. I will conduct three course evaluations throughout the semester. The evaluations will consist of a few short questions, such as whether the course material you read is helpful or not, whether a particular concept is easy to understand or not, anything you might need further explanation, etc. The evaluation is conducted for my own improvement and for the benefit of future students; it is anonymous and won’t be used against you[:]

2 Course Policies

2.1 Withdrawals

If you decide to discontinue the course for any reason, please make an official withdrawal. If you fail to officially withdraw from a class which you are no longer attending, you may receive an F on your permanent transcript. I WILL NOT GIVE INCOMPLETES.

2.2 Absences

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. If you should be absent for unavoidable reasons, you must check with me before I consider allowing any make-up work.
2.3 Classroom Conduct

*Treat everyone in the class with respect.* The classroom is an open forum for the expression of thoughtful ideas. As you share your ideas, be attentive to the feelings and (potential) histories of others, especially people from cultures or social groups other than your own. We will cover some personal and controversial topics and we must all be attentive to the effects of our statements and actions. We are all responsible for keeping discrimination, harassment, and intimidation out of the classroom.

*Behave with common courtesy.* Please turn off cell phones or other electronic devices that may disrupt class. If you know you need to leave class early, it is less distracting for me if you let me know before class starts, and then choose a seat close to the exit. Other disruptive behaviors in class include (but are not limited to): using your laptop for purposes other than note taking (BTW, do you know that laptop users perform more poorly in class than those taking notes by hand? See this *Scientific American* article), engaging in personal conversations, arriving late, making rude and sarcastic comments. I will remove from the class those whose behavior is disruptive to learning.

2.4 Cheating and Other Forms of Dishonesty

I have no tolerance for cheating in any form. Such will earn the student an automatic zero. Academic misconduct includes (but is not limited to): cheating on exams; using material from the Internet without citing it; plagiarizing any part of work done by someone else; and submitting substantially similar work for two courses without consent. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university’s policy on academic integrity: [http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html). If you have any questions, always consult with me.

3 Assessments and Grades

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on the following criteria. Please note that I do *not* give extra credit assignments.

3.1 Quizzes

There will be 8 in-class quizzes. These will cover the readings and lecture material from the previous week(s). Usually, quizzes will be given at the beginning of Wednesdays’ class and will be announced on Mondays. Each quiz, consisting of 5-7 questions (true-false, multiple choice, or short answers), will be worth 2.5 points towards your final grade. There are no opportunities to take missed quizzes regardless of circumstances.

3.2 Mid-term Exam

There will be one mid-term exam, which will be based on assigned readings, lectures, class discussions, and any other information covered in class. It is a closed book exam consisting of a mix of true-false, multiple choice, short answers and essays. Students are expected to take the exam during the designated time; make-up exams are given only in documented cases of excused absences (e.g., emergency, extreme illness, religious observations, scheduled activities of official university student organizations). In order to make up an exam, you must inform me *before* the exam and provide documentation to excuse your absence. Make-up exams are different from in-class exams, both in the type and content of questions (more essays, fewer multiple choice questions). The mid-term exam will contribute 30 points towards your final grade.
3.3 Short Papers

You are expected to produce two 4-5 page (excluding references) double-spaced short papers (12 font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). The first paper on Stratification, Class and Inequality is compulsory. For the second paper, you can choose one of the five questions outlined in Section 6 of the syllabus. These papers are intended to test your understanding of the core ideas of the course. Recall one key objective of this course is to teach critical thinking. Your essays are therefore expected to demonstrate that you are able to critically address social issues and use the theories we have covered in this course to support your arguments. You should consult and draw from the assigned readings, the videos shown in class and at least three other pieces of literature (books, journal articles, newspapers) on the topic. Also, please correctly cite all the material that you use within the papers, and list those references in a separate page at the end of the paper. Please refer to the APA Format handout distributed in the course for correct citation format.

Your paper should have a clear thesis or idea that it proposes to develop. This is to say that your introductory paragraph should give a signpost of what your paper is about. The body where you develop your argument should consist of coherent paragraphs, each of which ties well with the previous and the following paragraphs. It is in this section that you develop the evidence to support your position. The last part is the conclusion where you should summarize the main points without necessary repeating what you have already presented. Please refer to the Basic Structure For an Academic Paper handout.

You may turn the papers in during class, or put them in my mailbox (McGuinn 426). No electronic copies will be graded. Clearly indicate the date and your name on the first page of your paper. For late papers, a penalty of 10% will be applied for each day that the paper is late. It is very important that you proofread your paper before submission. The two reaction papers will contribute 30 points (2 × 15 points) towards your final grade.

3.4 Participation and Collaboration

Build class camaraderie: prepare, participate, help others. Given that student participation is vital to the learning experience, part of your final grade will be based on class participation. You earn participation points by attending class, actively participating in large and small group activities, and making thoughtful contributions to class discussions. Participation in class discussion includes answering questions, asking questions that relate to course material, and responding to comments made by your peers. Students with excessive, unexplained absences (i.e., more than 3 classes missed) risk losing their participation grade, as do students who routinely show up late and/or unprepared for class. Participation is worth 20 points.

3.5 Final Exam

Finally, there will be a final exam with 4-5 short answer and short essay type questions that draw upon material from key themes and issues discussed over the semester. The questions will be distributed in the last class (May 4th). You will submit your answers to me before May 12th. It is worth 15 points. Students who have amassed a satisfactory (self-determined) grade by the time of the final test could skip this exam.

3.6 Grading

Letter grade assignment: Out of a possible 115 points,
A  92.50+
A-  89.50-92.49
B+  86.50-89.49
B   82.50-86.49
B-  79.50-82.49
C+  76.50-79.49
C   72.50-76.49
C-  69.50-72.49
D   59.50-69.49
F   <59.50

4 Important Dates to Remember

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5 Readings

The following schedule is tentative.

SECTION 1

In this section of the course, we will explore society, culture, and the individual. We will discuss theoretical and methodological foundations of sociology, and examine how social context drives individual behavior.

Week 1: The Sociological Imagination

January 20: Welcome and Introduction

- **Lecture**: introduction; course logic; requirements
- **Readings**: syllabus

January 22: The Sociological Imagination

- **Lecture**: troubles versus issues
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 1 (pp. 1-20; 33-38); Mills "The Sociological Imagination"
• Handout: Sociological Imagination

Week 2: Sociological Theories and Methods

January 25: Sociological Theories
• Lecture: the emergence of Sociology; classic theorists
• Readings: YMAY Chapter 1 (pp. 21-28)

January 27: Sociological Theoretical Approaches
• Lecture: theoretical approaches (9A)\(^1\)
• Readings: YMAY Chapter 1 (pp. 29-32; 38-39; 132-134)
• Handout: Theoretical Approaches Exercise

January 29: Sociological Research Methods
• Readings: YMAY Chapter 2

Week 3: Culture, Socialization, and Social Interaction

February 1: Culture
• Lecture: social norms (7B); ethnocentrism (8B); the role of culture in the expression and detection of emotion (8C); culture (9A)
• Readings: YMAY Chapter 3 (pp. 73-87)

February 3: Socialization
• Lecture: socialization (7B); peer pressure (7B); influence of social factors, culture and socialization on identity formation (8A)
• Readings: YMAY Chapter 4 (pp. 113-127)
• Quiz: Quiz 1

February 5: Social Interaction
• Lecture: status (8C); role (8C); presentation of self (8C); verbal and nonverbal communication (8C)
• Readings: YMAY Chapter 4 (pp. 128-148)

\(^1\)Numbers in parentheses indicate the content categories as listed in AAMC’s overview of the Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior section (https://aamc-orange.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/e5/be/e5be39b7-0dc8-48fd-bcca-c068c8d38d65/psychological_social_and_biological_foundations_of_behavior_overview.pdf).
Week 4: Groups, Networks, and Organizations

February 8: Groups
- **Lecture**: conformity (7B); obedience (7B); groupthink (7B); groups (8C)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 5 (pp. 149-161)

February 10: Networks
- **Lecture**: networks (8C); social support (8C)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 5 (pp. 161-177)
- **Quiz**: Quiz 2

February 12: Organizations
- **Lecture**: organizations (8C)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 5 (pp. 177-181)

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Week 5: Social Control, Deviance, and Crime

February 15: Deviance and Social Control
- **Lecture**: social control (7B); deviance (7B)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 6 (pp. 185-200)

February 17: Theories on Deviance
- **Lecture**: stigma (8B)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 6 (pp. 200-212)
- **Quiz**: Quiz 3

February 19: Crime
- **Lecture**: crime; course evaluation
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 6 (pp. 212-229)

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SECTION 2

In this section of the course, we turn to problems that are of central concern to sociologists. First, we focus on the complexities of inequality by examining class, gender, and race stratification. Then we turn to issues of immigration and spatial inequality.
Week 6: Stratification, Mobility, and Class

February 22: Stratification and Inequality
- Lecture: identity (8A); aspects of social stratification (10A)
- Readings: YMAY Chapter 7 (pp. 235-255)

February 24: Mobility and Global Stratification
- Lecture: patterns of social mobility (10A)
- Readings: YMAY Chapter 7 (pp. 261-271); “Chapter 4 Economic Well-Being” in John Iceland A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective
- Quiz: Quiz 4

February 26: Social Class and Poverty
- Lecture: poverty (10A)
- Readings: YMAY Chapter 7 (pp. 256-261); YMAY Chapter 10

Week 7: Gender and Sexual Orientation

February 29: Gender Inequality
- Lecture: the role of gender in the expression and detection of emotion (8C); gender (9B)
- Readings: YMAY Chapter 8 (pp. 275-295; 305-317); “Chapter 3 Gender Inequality” in John Iceland A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective
- Handout: APA Format; Basic Structure for an Academic Paper

March 2: Sexuality and Sexual Orientation
- Lecture: sexual orientation (9B)
- Readings: YMAY Chapter 8 (pp. 296-304)

March 4: Intersectionality
- Lecture: intersectionality (10A)

Week 8: No Class. Happy Spring Break!
Week 9: Race/Ethnicity and Immigration

March 14: Racial and Ethnic Classification
- **Lecture**: race and ethnicity (9B)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 9 (pp. 321-344)
- **Due**: Paper 1

March 16: Racial Inequality and Discrimination
- **Lecture**: stereotypes (8B); processes that contribute to prejudice (8B); discrimination (8C)
- **Readings**: YMAY Chapter 9 (pp. 344-367); "Chapter 6 Racial and Ethnic Inequality" in John Iceland *A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective*
- **Quiz**: Quiz 5

March 18: Immigration
- **Lecture**: assimilation (9A); multiculturalism (9A); immigration status (9B); short exam review
- **Readings**: "Chapter 5 Immigration and Growing Diversity" in John Iceland *A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective*

SECTION 3

Building on the concepts introduced in the previous sections of the course, we now scrutinize particular social institutions, such as education, the family, and medicine.

Week 10: Spatial Inequality

March 21: Midterm Exam

March 23: Spatial Inequality
- **Lecture**: residential segregation (10A); neighborhood safety and violence (10A); environmental justice (10A); course evaluation
- **Readings**: "Chapter 7 Migration and Residential Segregation" in John Iceland *A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective*

March 25: Good Friday. No Class.

Week 11: No Class. Wen is attending PAA (Population Association of America) annual meeting.
Week 12: Education, Religion, and Family

April 4: Education
- **Lecture:** education (9A); self-fulfilling prophecy (8B); stereotype threat (8B)
- **Readings:** YMAY Chapter 13

April 6: Religion
- **Lecture:** religion (9A)
- **Readings:** YMAY Chapter 16 (skip pp. 639-644)

April 8: Family
- **Lecture:** family (9A)
- **Readings:** YMAY Chapter 12; “Chapter 2 The American Family” in John Iceland *A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective*
- **Handout:** Some Guidelines for Writing Sociological TV Reviews; Some Guidelines for Writing Sociological Book Reviews

Week 13: Health

April 11: Health and Illness
- **Lecture:** health and medicine (9A); health disparities (10A)
- **Readings:** YMAY Chapter 11 (pp. 414-416; 418-443); "Chapter 8 Health and Mortality” in John Iceland *A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective*

April 13: Medicalization and Healthcare System
- **Lecture:** healthcare disparities (10A)
- **Readings:** YMAY Chapter 11 (pp. 407-414; 416-418)
- **Quiz:** Quiz 6

April 15: Key Findings from 50 Years of Medical Sociology

Week 14: Economy and Politics

April 18: Patriot’s Day. No Class.

April 20: Work and the Economy
- **Lecture:** economy (9A)
- **Readings:** YMAY Chapter 14
- **Quiz:** Quiz 7
April 22: Politics
  - Lecture: government (9A)
  - Readings: YMA Chapter 15

SECTION 4
Finally, we deal more seriously with stability and change in a more and more global world.

Week 15: Social Change
April 25: Demographic Shifts
  - Lecture: age (9B); theories of demographic change (9B); population growth and decline (9B); fertility, migration, and mortality (9B)
  - Readings:
    – "Chapter 1 American Demographic Growth" in John Iceland *A Portrait of America: The Demographic Perspective*
  - Due: Paper 2

April 27: Urbanization
  - Lecture: urbanization (9B)

April 29: Social Change
  - Lecture: collective behavior (7B)
  - Readings: YMA Chapter 18 (pp. 691-698; 721-723)

Week 16: Urbanization and Globalization
May 2: Social Movements
  - Lecture: social movements (9B)
  - Readings: YMA Chapter 18 (pp. 698-717)
  - Quiz: Quiz 8

May 4: Globalization
  - Lecture: globalization (9B); course evaluation
6 Themes for Papers

6.1 COMPULSORY: Stratification, Class, and Inequality (Due March 14)

Using occupation and occupational change as your mobility criteria, view the social mobility within your family for three generations. As you discuss the differences in jobs among your grandfather, father; and yourself (or your grandmother, mother and yourself), apply these terms correctly: vertical and horizontal mobility, upward and downward mobility, intragenerational and intergenerational mobility. Explain fully why you think people in your family have moved up, moved down, or remained at the same status level. To discuss status changes, you should use concepts discussed in class regarding changes in the social, political and/or economic spheres in our society over time. The outside literature you use for this paper should deal with the economic, political and social developments of the period you are dealing with. For example, if your grandfather’s occupational status was affected by WWII, you should use the literature addressing how this war affected society in numerous ways, including livelihoods, family composition, gender roles, etc.

6.2 OPTION 1: Feminist Movement (Due April 25)

The driving force of the feminist movement was and is to fight for gender equality in our society. Some people argue that this objective has been achieved at this beginning of the 21st century. Women are said to now have equal opportunities as men. It is argued that women occupy powerful position in our political landscape and are thus no longer disadvantaged. Those often hailed as representing the progress women made include Condoleeza Rice who became the US Secretary of State under Bush and Hilary Clinton who also occupied this post under Obama’s first term. According to this argument, the gains women made in the last four decades show that there is no longer a need for feminism as its objectives have been accomplished. How true is this assertion? Consult with the material covered in the lecture and additional literature to support your position.

6.3 OPTION 2: Race/Ethnicity (Due April 25)

Does affirmative action still have a future in the United States? On the one hand, increasing number of African Americans have joined the middle class by earning college degrees, professional jobs, and new homes. [The United States has its first African American President who is now in his second term]. Yet blacks are still far more likely than whites to live in poverty, to be incarcerated, to attend poor schools, and to lack economic opportunities. Given these trends, does affirmative action still have a role in American society?

6.4 OPTION 3: Sociological Imagination Memoir (Due April 25)

Take what you have learned this semester about sociology, and apply it to better understand your own life. In your memoir, analyze an aspect of your own life using a sociological lens, placing your own experiences within the larger historical, cultural and social context. In your analysis, you should apply course themes and concepts that we have discussed in class. For example, you might discuss your gender socialization experiences and their effect on your career ambitions or identity as an adult, or you may discuss the ways in which social class has shaped your life experiences and life chances. There are many possibilities, and I encourage you to write about themes that you are most interested in or that you think have had the largest impact in shaping you or your opportunity structures. An example of this kind of analysis is represented in Honky, in which sociologist Dalton Conley (our textbook author) contextualizes his own life experiences focusing on race and class as powerful forces which shaped his childhood and educational attainment in comparison with the other children from
his neighborhood. To get a feel for writing a sociological memoir, check out this episode from the podcast Office Hours.

6.5 OPTION 4: Sociological TV Review (Due April 25)

*Grey’s Anatomy*, *Boston Med*, and *Private Practice* are three very different television shows that focus on the lives of medical doctors. First, select one of these television shows and watch an episode of your choice. Then, pick TWO sociological theoretical perspectives (e.g., functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, feminism, etc.) and write a sociological TV review using material from the textbook and lecture. You should provide a brief synopsis in the introductory paragraph, take time to explain each of the theoretical perspectives, and apply each in turn to a theoretical analysis of the episode. Note that examples from the episode are used to provide evidence of specific sociological factors; you are not asked to write a TV summary. At a later date, you will receive a detailed handout regarding this assignment.

6.6 OPTION 5: Sociological Book Review (Due April 25)

Select one book from the following recommended reading list and write an in-depth analytical review, incorporating concepts and theories discussed in class and found in the readings for this course. Note this is not a book report where you tell me what the book said and whether or not you liked it. This is a critique of the book in which you briefly summarize the contents then criticize parts of the book. You should criticize the book at one of two or at both levels: internal criticisms—problems with the actual text of the book; external criticisms—problems with what the book included or excluded. At a later date, you will receive a detailed handout regarding this assignment.